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Cambodia: The situation in the countryside is relatively quiet, but signs point to renewed trouble in the near future.

Western correspondents who have motored into Svay Rieng and Takeo provinces report civilian traffic back to normal, but Cambodian security forces maintaining roadblocks along major routes into the capital. They saw no evidence of fresh demonstrations or of the peasant bands that were active in Takeo earlier in the week.

The government has also been picking up some welcome support in the capital. Responding to appeals, large crowds of enthusiastic youths turned out in Phnom Penh to enlist in the armed forces. The influential head of the principal Buddhist order addressed the nation in a radio broadcast that included some clear anti-Sihanouk allusions.

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South Vietnam: [Communist forces carried out widespread but generally light shelling attacks and several ground probes during the night.]

[The attacks were against more than 100 US and South Vietnamese positions scattered throughout the country, including the allied bases at Da Nang, Camh Ranh Bay, and three US division headquarters north of Saigon. Ground combat was reported at several points along the Cambodian border west of Saigon, but no sustained battles developed. First reports indicate that eight US soldiers have been killed and 43 wounded in the fighting. Enemy losses were put at about 50 dead.]

[The surge of activity is one of the liveliest of the winter-spring period, although so far it appears somewhat less intense than the countrywide "highpoints" launched periodically by the Communists in 1969. The latest attacks probably constitute the much-delayed enemy offensive phase which was originally planned to take place in February.]

[Allied forces in South Vietnam were anticipating an increase in enemy attacks. South Vietnamese National Police called a special alert yesterday throughout the country.]

[There have been some signs that last night's actions will be followed up soon by a second phase of attacks. The disposition of the enemy's larger units and their many supply problems, however, make it doubtful that there will be any major concerted effort of long duration.]

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Thailand: There is increasing discontent with Prime Minister Thanom's leadership.

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[REDACTED] Last month the government was widely criticized when the cabinet approved a draft bill designed to subordinate the independent Thai judiciary to the executive. The criticism came from the judiciary--highly respected for its professionalism--the King, parliamentary leaders, and students.

Stunned by this unprecedented reproach and warned that the normally progovernment legislature would defeat the bill, Thanom backed down. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Critics who have previously centered their attacks on second-rung leaders are now more willing [REDACTED] to turn their sights on the prime minister.

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There is no evidence that Thanom's partnership with Praphat, on which the present government is based, is in jeopardy. However, Thanom has never relished his role as prime minister and may find retirement increasingly attractive if his standing continues to slip. [REDACTED]

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USSR - Communist China: Moscow's pessimism about the outcome of the Peking talks is growing.

The Soviets may be debating the recall of chief negotiator Kuznetsov. As long as major frontier clashes or other significant incidents are avoided, however, they will be reluctant to break off the discourse, which they point to as "proof" of their desire to normalize relations.

In case the Peking talks collapse, however, the Soviets are building a propaganda record. A 31 March Red Star article, for example, accused China of "openly provocative" military measures, including large-scale military construction, in areas bordering the Soviet Union and Mongolia.

The Soviets apparently are exaggerating the limited Chinese defense measures in these areas, and are attempting to counter Chinese allegations that Peking is being forced to negotiate under military pressure.



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Laos: Government forces continued to meet stiff resistance in efforts to dislodge the enemy from hill positions north of Long Tieng. General Vang Pao has moved additional troops into Sam Thong in an attempt to consolidate government control of this important refugee center. As a result of the improved security situation, elements of the civilian population have begun trickling back into the area.

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Guatemala: [It is likely that the kidnapers of the West German ambassador are members of the pro-Cuban Rebel Armed Forces (FAR). Four FAR activists, who participated in the kidnaping of Foreign Minister Fuentes and US Embassy officer Holly, were arrested on 21 March. The ambassador's abductors probably will hold him until these and possibly other FAR captives are released. The government almost surely will feel obligated to cooperate fully with the kidnapers to secure the ambassador's safe return.]

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Cuba-USSR: Minister of armed forces Raul Castro will arrive in Moscow early this month at the invitation of Soviet Defense Minister Andrei Grechko, according to a TASS announcement. Discussions presumably will include Soviet military assistance, although no reasons were given by TASS for the visit. Castro's last trip to the USSR took place in late 1966.

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